

# Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: August 17-18, 2005

Reference No.: 2.2c.(2)  
Action Item

From: CINDY McKIM  
Chief Financial Officer

Prepared by: Jay Norvell  
Division Chief  
Environmental Analysis

Ref: **APPROVAL OF PROJECT FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF FUNDING,**  
**06-Tul-65, PM 0.0/18.0**  
**RESOLUTION E-05-15**

## **ISSUE:**

The attached resolution proposes to approve for future consideration of funding the following project for which a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) has been completed:

- Route 65 in Tulare County – Widen to four-lane expressway near Terra Bella.

This project is currently programmed in the 2004 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for \$3,195,000 in Regional Improvement Program (RIP) funds for right-of-way capital and support with prior support dollars coming from RIP funds and Traffic Congestion Relief Program funds. The project is not fully funded. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$69 million for capital and support. The Department is working with Tulare County on developing a plan to fund the remaining project in a future STIP cycle.

The FEIR has been transmitted to California Transportation Commission staff.

The Department of Transportation (Department) has approved the project for construction. This approval and the filing of the Notice of Determination with the Office of Planning and Research will satisfy the environmental requirements for this stage of the project planning process.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Department recommends that the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, approve the attached Resolution E-05-15.

Attachments

## **CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

### **Resolution for Future Consideration of Funding 06-Tul-65, PM 0.0/18.0**

#### **Resolution E-05-15**

- 1.1 WHEREAS**, the California Department of Transportation (Department) has completed a Final Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines for the following project:

  - Route 65 in Tulare County – Widen to four-lane expressway near Terra Bella.
- 1.2 WHEREAS**, the Department has certified that the Final Environmental Impact Report has been completed pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines for its implementation; and
- 1.3 WHEREAS**, the California Transportation Commission, as a responsible agency, has considered the information contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report; and
- 1.4 WHEREAS**, written Findings indicate that specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations make it infeasible to avoid or fully mitigate to a level less than significant the effects associated with noise impacts as a result of the project; and
- 1.5 WHEREAS**, the above significant effects are acceptable when balanced against the facts as set forth in the Statement of Overriding Considerations.
- 2.1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the California Transportation Commission does hereby adopt those Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations that support approval of this recommended project to allow for future consideration of funding.

## **FINDINGS**

### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR STATE ROUTE 65**

#### **TERRA BELLA EXPRESSWAY FROM THE KERN COUNTY LINE TO 0.2**

#### **KILOMETERS (0.1MILE) SOUTH OF THE STATE ROUTE 190/65**

#### **INTERCHANGE IN THE CITY OF PORTERVILLE (KP 0.0/29.0 [PM 0.0/18.0]).**

The following information is presented to comply with Section 15091 of the State CEQA Guidelines and Section 1509.6 of the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations. Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

The following effects have been identified in the EIR as resulting from the project. Effects found not to be significant have not been included.

#### **Adverse Environmental Effect: Noise – Mobile Home Park**

The project would convert a two-lane expressway into a four-lane expressway in a rural, mostly agricultural area. The predicted future traffic would increase noise levels at the mobile home park in excess of 12 decibels over the next 20 years in the project limits.

#### **Findings:**

Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project, which avoid or substantially lessen the significant environmental effect as identified in the final EIR.

#### **Adverse Environmental Effect: Noise – Isolated Receptors**

The project would convert a two-lane expressway into a four-lane expressway in a rural, mostly agricultural area. In some cases around isolated receptors, noise levels would surpass the FHWA Noise Abatement Criterion threshold of 67 decibels for residences.

#### **Findings:**

Specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations, including provision of employment opportunities for highly trained workers, make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the final EIR.

### **Statement of Facts:**

Construction of one soundwall at the Deer Creek Recreational Vehicle Park was found to be both reasonable and feasible. Due to unreasonable cost, it is not reasonable to reduce the noise impacts at all the potentially affected sensitive receptors in the project area.

Noise abatement is not feasible or reasonable for two residences. Noise abatement is feasible but not reasonable for approximately ten scattered farmhouses and residences.

Noise levels at residences that are isolated cannot be mitigated because the cost for a noise barrier would not be reasonable.

## **STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STATEMENT OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATE ROUTE 65 TERRA BELLA EXPRESSWAY FROM THE KERN COUNTY LINE TO 0.2 KILOMETERS (0.1MILE) SOUTH OF THE STATE ROUTE 190/65 INTERCHANGE IN THE CITY OF PORTERVILLE (KP 0.0/29.0 [PM 0.0/18.0]).**

The following information is presented to comply with Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and Section 1509.6 of the Department of Transportation and California Transportation Commission Environmental Regulations. Reference is made to the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the project, which is the basic source for the information.

#### **The following impacts have been identified as significant and not fully mitigable:**

Unavoidable noise impacts would result from the construction of the proposed project. Noise studies determined that sensitive receptors would experience an increase in traffic noise levels in excess of 12 decibels over the next 20 years. In some cases, noise levels would surpass the FHWA Noise Abatement Criterion threshold of 67 decibels for residences-69 decibels without the project and 70 decibels with the project.

#### **Overriding considerations that support approval of this recommended project are as follows:**

Existing State Route 65 is a major north-south, interregional roadway between Bakersfield, Porterville, Visalia, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and is experiencing increased congestion from a mixture of commuter and recreational traffic, slow-moving farm equipment, and the commercial trucks that make up 9 to 30 percent of the traffic volume. With the increasing numbers of automobiles and trucks, vehicle clustering is common as drivers have fewer opportunities to safely pass slower moving traffic.

The proposed project would widen State Route 65 from a two-lane to a four-lane expressway with standard width median and shoulders from the Kern County line to 0.2

kilometers (0.1 mile) south of the State Route 190/65 interchange in the City of Porterville (KP 0.0/29.0 [PM 0.0/18.0]). One Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative were studied for the project.

The project is needed because the existing conventional road does not provide adequate capacity for projected traffic volumes. Traffic projections indicate that the level of service will deteriorate to "E" and "F" without improvements during the planning years of 2007 to 2027. In addition, accident rates at eight of the intersections in the project limits are at or above the total statewide average accident rate.

The project would increase capacity to meet the existing and projected traffic volumes and improve safety and operations on State Route 65.

### ***Conclusion***

The improvement in traffic congestion, traffic flow and circulation on State Route 65, and overall improvement to traffic safety provided by the build alternative, outweighs the unavoidable impacts identified in the findings. These traffic improvements will provide safer and more efficient access for interregional travels to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and to Bakersfield, Porterville, and Visalia.

The environmental impacts of the Build and No Build Alternatives were considered in the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact. The Build Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative because it would best fulfill the purpose and need of the project.

The No Build Alternative offers no relief from existing or future deficiencies, and is incompatible with the transportation objectives of the State of California and Tulare County.

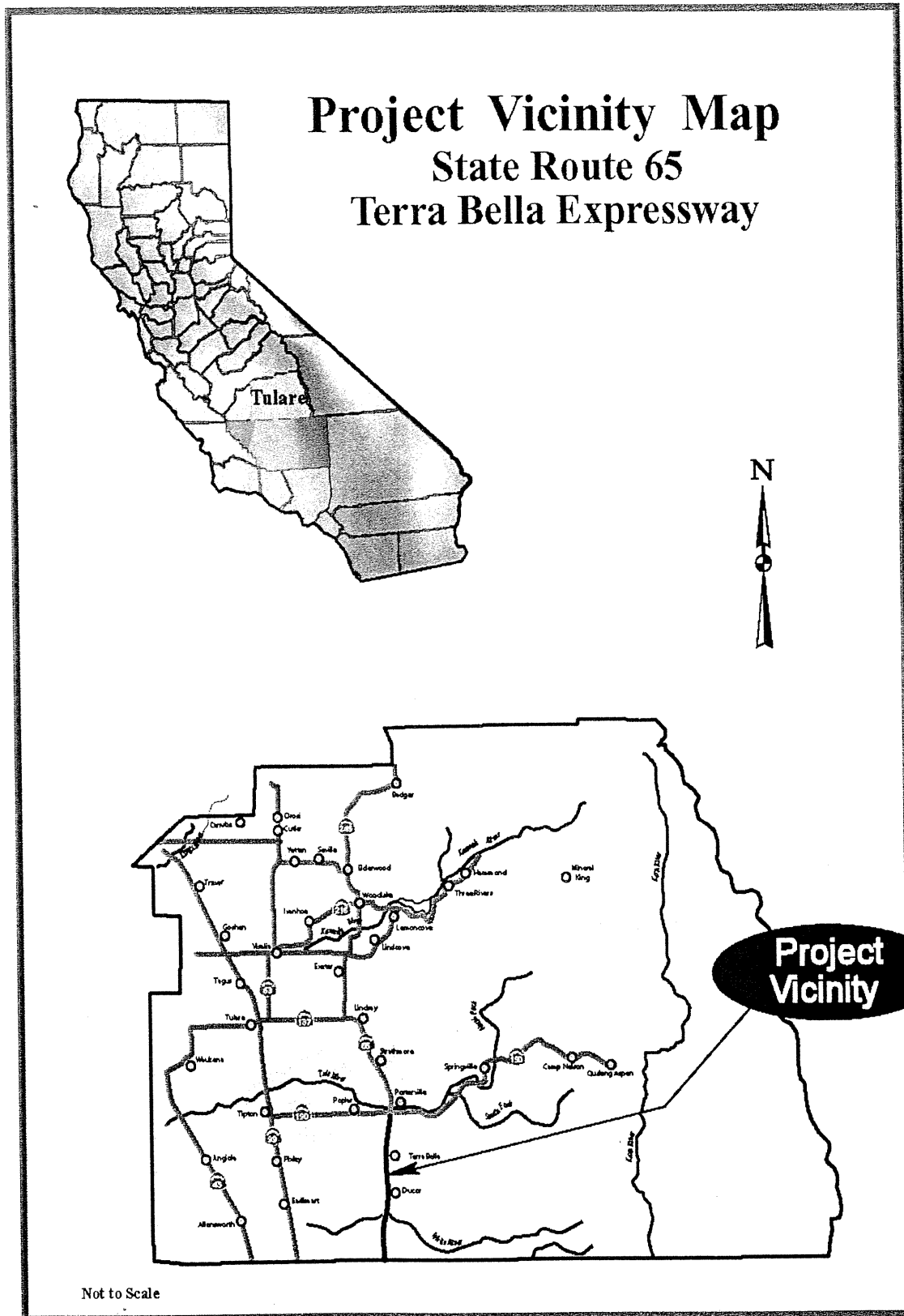


Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map